

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) A chain shortening device ~~for shortening in combination with~~ an associated chain consisting of oblong links having a material thickness d , an outer width w and an outer length l which is longer than said outer width w , said chain shortening device comprising:

a unitary elongated generally C-shaped body ~~shaped generally like the letter "C"~~ with a mid portion and two free end portions, and first and second slot portions located at the free end portions of the "C",

each of said slot portions including a first and a second pocket-like configuration, respectively, for positioning selected links of said associated chain in a first and a second coupling position, respectively, and

each of said first and second slot portions having, adjacent to said pocket-like configuration, a width which is wider than the material thickness d of said chain links but narrower than the outer width w of said chain links, and adjacent to a mid portion of said elongated body, a widened slot portion defining a respective one of two ~~[[an]]~~ apertures, which ~~[[is]]~~ are wide enough to permit threading said associated chain through said aperture,

so that, upon coupling said associated chain to the shortening device with two selected links located in said first and second coupling positions, respectively, the chain links located between the two selected links will form either a straight chain portion, extending at the side of said mid portion of the elongated, generally C-shaped body, or a longer slack chain portion enabling the effective shortening of said associated chain,

wherein

said slot portions form parts of a central, single slot extending continuously and longitudinally between said first and second pocket-like configurations, and

said central, single slot has a widened mid portion forming a central lead-through opening, which includes said two apertures and which is dimensioned to permit threading through a loop of said associated chain with two parallel strands,

whereby the shortening device can be handled as a separate unit and be attached sideways to an existing, associated chain for the purpose of shortening the effective length thereof.

2. (Currently amended) A ~~chain-shortening device~~ combination as defined in claim 1, wherein said central lead-through opening is elongated in the longitudinal direction of said elongated body.

3. (Currently amended) A ~~chain-shortening device~~ combination as defined in claim 2, wherein the width of the slot portions adjacent to the central lead-through opening is only slightly wider than said material thickness d of the links of the associated chain, so as to prevent coupling of the shortening device to a chain consisting of links being stronger than those of the associated chain, and the length of central lead-through opening is such as to permit threading through a loop of an associated chain with the links of the two parallel strands of the loop being positioned next to each other in the longitudinal direction of the elongated body.

4. (Currently amended) A ~~chain-shortening device~~ combination as defined in claim 3, wherein said central lead-through opening is wider than said outer width w of the links of said associated chain and longer than 1.5 times that width w .

5. (Currently amended) A ~~chain-shortening device~~ combination as defined in claim 1, wherein said central lead-through opening has, at said mid portion of said elongated body, a waist portion with a reduced width, which is less than the outer width w of said chain links but greater than the material thickness d of said chain links, said waist defining said two apertures on opposite sides thereof so as to permit threading through a central portion of an upright link forming the leading end of said loop of said chain through said waist portion and threading through the adjoining parallel strands through said two apertures.

6. (Currently amended) A ~~chain-shortening device~~ combination as defined in claim 5, wherein each of said apertures are wider than said outer width w of said chain links but shorter, in the longitudinal direction of said elongated body, than said outer width w .

7. (Currently amended) A ~~chain-shortening device~~ combination as defined in claim 1, wherein retainer members are located in each of said first and second slot portions so as to selectively retain said first and second selected links adjacent to said first and second coupling positions.

8. (Currently amended) A ~~chain-shortening device~~ combination as defined in claim 1, wherein said free end portions of said elongated body are directed obliquely away from each other.

9. (Currently amended) A ~~chain-shortening device~~ combination as defined in claim 1, wherein seating surfaces, which form parts of said pocket-like configurations and face towards each other, are located at a mutual distance L from each other, said distance L being

$$L = n \times p + q$$

where

n is an odd integer > 0

p is the inner length of each chain link of the associated chain,

$$0 < q < 3.5 d$$

d is the material thickness of each chain link.

10. (Currently amended) A ~~chain-shortening device~~ combination as defined in claim ~~[[10]]~~ 9, wherein $2d < q < 3d$.